



The

Megiddo Message

Devoted to the Cause of Christ

The Better Resurrection

“WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?”

URGENT BUSINESS — TOMORROW

“DECEIVED AND BEING DECEIVED”

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

ITEMS FROM OUR MAIL BAG

WHEN THE DAY DAWNS AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY

Vol. 42, No. 16

July 30, 1955

THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

July 30, 1955

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THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE is published biweekly by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Rd., Rochester 19, N. Y. Subscription rates: One year, \$1.00; 6 months, 50 cents; single copies, 5 cents. In Great Britain and other sterling areas subscription fees are payable through the medium of the International Money Orders which can be secured through the local bank, or International Reply Coupons (current value, eight cents) which can be purchased at the post office. Make checks or Money Orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Entered as second-class matter, October 15, 1920, at the Post Office at Rochester, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879.

The Better Resurrection

Scripture Reading: First Corinthians 15: 12—58

THE doctrine of the resurrection is one of the grandest and most inspiring themes to be found upon the pages of Holy Writ. Without a resurrection there could be no future existence, and without hope of a future existence there could be no stimulus to impel perfection of character now.

The great nominal church has rejected the hope of life eternal through a resurrection from the dead, and substituted in its stead the false doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This doctrine is without Scriptural support.

The Bible does not teach a dualism of soul and body; the soul capable of eternal survival. Quite to the contrary, it teaches that the soul (a synonymous term for body) is subject to death. "Every living soul died"; "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"; "Every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed" (Rev. 16: 3; Ezek. 18: 20; Acts 3: 23).

The means of a future existence is through a physical resurrection or rebuilding of the body. This involves belief in the supernatural, which also is largely rejected today. However, we shall prove that the supernatural has in the past intervened in human affairs, restoring to life a dead body; and that the same process can and will be repeated, according to the promises of Scripture.

The Case of Christ

Christ died. It is an indisputable fact. When the soldiers came to Golgotha to break the legs of the crucified to prevent their escape, they did not break Jesus' legs, for they found Him "dead already."

He was buried. And the third day found the tomb empty. One of two possibilities must be accepted. Either the body had been raised as the Christians asserted, or it had been stolen as the Jews declared. To subscribe to the latter possibility is to reject numerous certainties of history which surrounded the event.

In the first place, if Christ's resurrection is not accepted as factual, how then can we account for the astonishing growth of the Church in a short time after His death from a handful of scattered followers to an organization requiring seven deacons to supervise the daily ministrations? At the time of the crucifixion, nothing seemed more abandoned to hopelessness, more doomed to extinction than the Church which He founded. What caused a handful of broken, dispirited men to stop shaking in fear and become suddenly transformed, dramatically intense, courageous, powerful? From whence came the new life blood of the Church after His death save through the power of His resurrection?

What changed Peter from the coward he was the night of Jesus' trial to a bold and unflinching personality within a matter of days? He himself answers: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Pet. 1: 3).

The man from Tarsus contributes evidence of equal import. He entered the scene as a supporter of the priests,

and emerged as a most ardent defender of the Christians. Why? Why, after attempting to suppress the movement by force, was he himself suppressed and assimilated by it? Why, after being the outstanding figure on one side of the controversy, did he become the outstanding figure on the other? Why should a man of such strong mental caliber be uprooted from his cherished beliefs and swept like chaff before the wind into the camp of his most hated enemies? There can be but one answer: *the Damascus road, where he saw the risen Christ*. The force of sight was irresistible. From that moment, the empty tomb became his conviction and conversion. It no longer represented a stolen body but became a symbol of the risen Christ. Nor was Paul's conversion any ephemeral or hysterical experience. He retained his conviction consistently throughout the remainder of his career, and made mention of the risen Christ in many of his Epistles.

These facts of Christ's resurrection cannot be evaded. The intervening of the supernatural to restore Him to life is our assurance that the future resurrection can be achieved in like manner.

Paul's Resurrection Sermon

The resurrection sermon recorded in First Corinthians 15 is recognized as one of the greatest pieces of literature of all time. But only as we bear in mind that its author, Saint Paul, was himself a witness of Christ's resurrection, can we fully appreciate its value. He had actually seen a man who had experienced release from death through a physical resurrection of the body and who by His own testimony was "alive forevermore." In the light of this fact, the value of Paul's discourse is unequalled as a source of accurate information concerning life, death, and a future life.

Let us read, beginning with verse 12: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" Christ's resurrection was a certainty. He, Paul, was a witness. In view of his testimony, how could anyone disbelieve the future resurrection?

Paul continues his argument: "But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

If there be no resurrection of the dead, then the Patriarch Job's hope was a delusion, for he declared, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19: 25—27). If there be no resurrection, the

Psalms were deceived in believing that he would "awake" in the likeness of his Creator (Ps. 17:15). Isaiah, too, was mistaken, for he said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise" (26:19). In like manner, Daniel's proclamation that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake" was a falsehood (Dan. 12:2). And Martha was in error when at the death of her brother Lazarus she said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (John 11:24).

But no! These saints of old were not deceived. They were justified in their belief, as Christ's resurrection confirms.

Paul continues in I Cor. 15:20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"—His resurrection is a pledge that all shall rise—"every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." This establishes the *time* of the resurrection: at Christ's second advent.

Preparation for the Resurrection

Paul would not give an elaborate discourse about the future life without telling us how to prepare. Verse 32 describes his personal preparation: "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die." Not only at Ephesus, but wherever he went, Paul was confronted with antagonists as ferocious as beasts. The Almighty tells us in Eccl. 3:18, 19 that mankind in their natural condition are beasts. In II Tim. 4:17 Paul said, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion"—an evil worker. All through the Bible evil workers are represented by wild beasts. Evil workers are called dogs, lions, wolves. Jesus said to His disciples, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. 10:16). So Paul said, What advantageth it me to fight off these evil workers if there is no resurrection of the dead? If there were no future recompense he would "eat and drink"—enjoy the present brief existence on a lower moral level.

Naught but the hope of a resurrection and everything beyond—everything of joy, peace, happiness and life eternal—will impel men and women to fight with all the wild beasts which must be encountered in their struggle for moral perfection. Jesus encountered "wild beasts" during those forty days when He was tempted in the wilderness (Mark 1:13), and all who follow in His footsteps can expect no less. There will be temptations from without and within equal in fierceness to wild beasts. And only the hope of the resurrection enables full and complete resistance.

It was the hope of the resurrection that enabled all the deeds of moral valor recorded of the faithful in Hebrews 11. We read that "through faith" they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (vs. 33-35).

Paul records more details concerning the preparation for a future life. We read in I Cor. 15:33, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners." Another translator renders it, "Bad companionships spoil good morals." The same idea is expressed in Prov. 13:20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a com-

panion of fools shall be destroyed." If we hope to share in that better resurrection, we must choose our company, and watch our choice. In some cases circumstances may compel us to be with the ungodly, but we must not take comfort and delight in their company. Like Lot, we must be "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."

Paul continues in I Cor. 15:34, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame." It is high time now, when the signs of the times proclaim the day of the Lord to be at hand, to awake to righteousness and cease sinning, cease transgressing God's holy law.

How Are the Dead Raised Up?

We read in I Cor. 15:35, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" In other words, Are the dead to be raised mortal or immortal? Now this is a foolish question. As one of the other translators expresses it, "It is talking without using your minds!" Following the resurrection, the inspired writers place the Judgment and the distribution of rewards next in the sequence of events. If the dead were raised immortal, they would already be in possession of their reward, and the Judgment would be without significance. Furthermore, if the dead were raised immortal, then all the unworthy characters of the ages—such as Demas, Solomon, Judas—would come forth from the grave to eternal life, making the future world far from desirable.

The employ of reason makes clear at the onset that the dead are raised mortal, simply brought onto a level with the living that together they may be judged and rewarded. However, Paul deemed it necessary to emphasize this fact by much repetition, to which purpose the following verses are devoted.

In verse 36 we read, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." Paul is comparing the resurrection to the sowing or casting out of seed. Those who are sown or cast out of their graves cannot be quickened or given immortality unless during their probation they have died to sin. This is the death that Paul died. He said in verse 31, "I die daily." It is the death that Christ died. "In that he died, he died unto sin once" (Rom. 6:10). It is the death which all must die who wish to be "quickened" or made immortal at Judgment.

"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain" (verse 37). That which is sown or cast out in the resurrection is not the body that shall be; it is not yet clothed with immortality. Whether they wake or sleep, all who have entered into covenant to serve the Lord shall be gathered at Judgment in their mortal condition. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). Those who prove to be wheat shall be granted immortality, while the tares reap the second death.

Again verses 42-44 express the same thought. "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." Whether faithful or unfaithful, the covenant-makers are "sown" or cast out of the grave "in corruption," "in dishonor," "in weakness," "a natural body." Those who have died to sin—whom the Judgment reveals to be wheat—are raised "in incorruption," "in glory,"

"in power," "a spiritual body." This is the reward, the better resurrection, the *egeiro*, the lifting up to a higher plane beyond the reach of decay and death. Whether living when Christ comes, or if summoned from the grave to Judgment, the change to immortality is the only means of escape from death. The living and the resurrected alike must pass through this change if they are to live forevermore.

Paul continues in verse 44, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body"—not two bodies but one body changed from the natural to the spiritual, from the mortal to the immortal. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (vs. 45, 46). We must stand at the Judgment seat of Christ before we receive the divine nature, the change from mortality to immortality.

In verse 47 we read, "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." The second man will be made like unto the Lord from heaven, that is, he will be given the same nature. If we die to sin as Christ died, we shall receive the same eternal life that He received, as says verse 49, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." If only we bear the image of the earthly, that is, become made over into His image mentally and morally now, we shall then bear the image of the heavenly. This same truth is found in Romans 6:5, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Our resurrection is as certain as Christ's if our death to sin is as complete.

In I Cor. 15:50 we read, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." No, we shall not inherit the Kingdom of God in our mortal state. Before the Kingdom can be established there must be the resurrection, Judgment, separation and rewarding of the faithful with immortality.

The next verse of our lesson is a special comfort to the saints who are living when Christ returns. "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Paul knew that he would fall asleep and lie in the tomb for centuries of time ere Christ's return. So this promise can apply to none who lived in his day. When he wrote, "We shall not all sleep," he referred to the favored few of these last days who should live to see the return of the Messiah.

Jesus taught this same truth in John 11:25, 26. When conversing with Martha after her brother's death, He said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Will it not be a wonderful blessing to pass through the change from mortality to immortality without ever experiencing death's terrors!

In I Cor. 15:53, 54 Paul continues, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." In the real resurrection, after being raised from the tomb, this mortal shall put on immortality if judged worthy. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

All the millionaires and billionaires of earth, all the wise and notable, the kings and queens, cannot escape death's terrors. They do not want God's truth. They could

not be reached with this Gospel; they could not be induced to follow the teachings of this wonderful Book. But here we are told how we may gain the victory, how we may have death swallowed up of life. What other victory is worth anything when compared to this? A person might become earth's greatest painter, its greatest sculptor, but the end of even the most glowing mortal career is but death. The only way by which we can gain the victory over death and the grave is to form a character worthy of eternal life. The man or woman who conquers self is the one who will gain that victory. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life" (Rev. 2:7). What a reasonable plan!

We have seen great statesmen, millionaires and warriors of earth pass away to be no more. The faithful are the only ones who can cry, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Of all the victories of which we can conceive, there is no victory on earth equal to the victory over death and the grave. Death is a grim reaper, visiting every home on earth, asking no questions, claiming all humanity. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." He will give us victory over the grave. It is through our Lord Jesus Christ, through His wonderful Word and His perfect example that we are enabled to gain that victory. What other victory is worth anything by comparison? How people of the world will strive to climb a mountain, or gain the pre-eminence in some trivial thing; but in the scale of Eternity, what is it worth? Less, less than nothing.

Paul closed his discourse with these wonderful words: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." What a beautiful ending to this chapter! He first points us to the victory; then he says, "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Why? "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." Oh, you are not laboring for nothing! The worldlings labor, and all they receive in the end is six feet of mother earth. But for our labor in the Lord we can receive the better resurrection, the change from mortality to immortality, there to cry with the redeemed, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

There is no question but that Paul was the most wonderful witness of Christ's resurrection. If we accept his testimony, if it has its weight upon our minds, it will influence and transform our lives until we shall be worthy to stand with him and all the faithful in that glorious, soon-coming Resurrection Morn.

Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel, how weak! we rise, how full of power!
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong—
That we are sometimes overborne with care—
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled—when with us is prayer;
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?
—Sel.

"Watchman, What The Morning cometh..."

WATCHMAN, shout the glad tidings across a slumbering world! "*The morning cometh!*" a Morning radiant with opportunity, the dawn of a new Age for the inhabitants of earth, an age of joy, peace and prosperity! What brings the Morning? The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams (Mal. 4: 2).

On that grand and glorious Morning the hopes of the ancient Patriarchs, Prophets, and God's people throughout all ages have been centered. Abraham saw that Day afar off and was glad. Job declared with confidence, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (19: 25—27).



Christ—the nobleman of His parable—shall return in that Day from the far-off country to claim His Kingdom, to reward His servants, and reign as Prince of Peace, ruling in justice and equity. His coming "shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (II Sam. 23: 4).

For all the sleeping faithful that Morning holds rich recompense. When they awake in that Day, to merit "Well done" for their life of good work, the former troubles shall be forgotten. The miseries of life shall be remembered no more than floods gone by, and for the living it will be a day of joyous redemption as man's corrupt and inadequate systems of government are swept away and the forces of evil brought into subjection. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. . . . Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. 65: 16—22).

In that glad Morning, immortal life and Heaven's rich blessings shall be poured out in copious showers of the long-promised "latter rain."

"Weeping May Endure for a Night, but Joy Cometh in the Morning"

It is only for a brief season in the grand Plan of the Eternal that "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." This night of darkness shall pass, and then "the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. 60: 2).

"I Stand Continually Upon the Watchtower"

For the watcher whose implicit trust is in the unfailing strength of the Almighty, the darkness holds no terror. "The name [or word—Rev. 19: 13] of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18: 10). "Come, my people," is the loving invitation of the Lord, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment until the indignation be overpast. For behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (Isa. 26: 20, 21).

Within this haven of safety, this place of refuge from the storms of passion, of doubt, fear, and sin that sweep the world, the spiritual watchman tirelessly keeps his vigil, observing with gladness the signs of the passing of the night, with eyes alert that he miss none of the foreglory of the breaking Day. The lamp that he carries at his side shines like a beacon in the darkness to guide the footsteps of other souls seeking refuge from the turmoil without.

Forward into the future, and backward over the years the watchman gazes, viewing over and over again the chain of evidences that mark the breaking of the Day.

The Megiddo Message

What of the Night?"



Behind him are wondrous scenes to strengthen his faith. Looking backward over the centuries, he beholds the rise and fall of kingdoms, as predicted in God's Word; and two great wonders described by Daniel, holding aloft the lamp of Truth, separated by 1,260 years of impenetrable darkness during which God's angel keeps a lonely vigil over the Water of Life. To the ears of the watchman comes the echo of the "midnight cry," and he views ten virgins arising from their slumber to trim their lamps. The faith of the watchman is unbounded as he sees close at hand age-old prophecies for the "last days" rapidly meeting their fulfillment: The moral depravity, minutely described by Paul in his letter to Timothy; the cries for peace amid unprecedented preparations for war, accompanied by distress of nations, fear and perplexity, as foretold by the Master.

"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21: 25—28). Thus do the signs of the Morning send a thrill through the soul of the spiritual watchman who "looks for the Lord more eagerly than watchmen for the dawn" (Ps. 130: 6, Moffatt).

Though the hours stretch out and the vision seems to tarry, he is encouraged to "wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry" (Hab. 2: 3). The ever-increasing evidence pointing toward that Heavenly Dawn gives him the moral strength to continue in those duties that devolve upon the spiritual watchman, duties for God and for Truth, duties to himself and to his fellow men.

To him is the command: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26: 41). But even as he sets a guard against temptation from without, he must maintain an untiring watch over the spirit within. Over and over again he repeats the words, praying for help to

carry them out: "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved" (Hab. 2: 1).

Then his responsibility has its third phase, summed up in the solemn words of Ezek. 33: 7, "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me." Like a seal to the injunctions of the Prophets, come the words of the Master, "*What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch*" (Mark 13: 37).

There is no time for spiritual slumber within the tower of the Lord, for in the East can already be seen the foreglory of the Coming Day!

"And Then You Know What This Crisis Means . . ."

There is no more critical hour in the entire span of the ages, past, present or future, than the hour that brings in the Dawning of the Great Day of the Lord. The last moments of the long night of man's rule are upon us. The six thousand years allotted to him are slipping swiftly away. To those called out to wash and prepare white robes to meet the Lord, it means time only for finishing their work.

With increasing frequency, as the Great Day approaches, do warnings and exhortations to vigilance resound through the tower of the Lord. "You know what this Crisis means, you know it is high time to waken up; for Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. It is far on in the night, the day is almost here; so let us drop the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of the light" (Rom. 13: 11, 12, Moffatt).

It is a serious hour, for "*The morning cometh,*

and also the Night!"

Isa. 21: 12

Simultaneously with Morning comes Night—to the faithful a day of reward, to the unfaithful a night of punishment. For those who have turned deaf ears to the Watchman's oft-repeated warning, the day of the Lord will be "darkness, and not light, . . . even very dark, and no brightness in it" (Amos 5: 18—20). The glorious dawn of prosperity and happiness, the morning without a cloud of war or disease, they may never experience. Their sins forever eclipse the splendors of that fair day. For them the Eternal "maketh the day dark with night" (Amos 5: 8), a night of punishment, of death, of eternal oblivion.

Into that night shall pass all who refuse to walk in the light and the law of the new Day, "the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and

whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters and all liars."

For all the world it shall be the dawning of the great Day of the Lord when He shall go forth and conquer the forces of evil that He may establish His Kingdom of peace and righteousness. For those who will heed the message, "Fear God, and give glory to him," it will be the dawning of a day of opportunity, the dawn of the day in which He will proceed to fill the earth with the "glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," for in that day all shall know the Lord "from the least to the greatest" (Heb. 8: 11). "And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day"!

URGENT BUSINESS—Tomorrow

IT WAS THE FOURTH CENTURY B. C., and the once-powerful city-state of Thebes lay unhappy under a foreign yoke. Archias, Leontidas, and Philip, the oligarchy of tyrants installed by the conquering Spartans, ruled with a heavy hand. Every precaution was taken to wipe out possible resistance, and those patriots who could not be apprehended and executed were outlawed.

In spite of all this, as usually happens, a liberation movement was soon launched under the leadership of one Pelopidas. Assassination seemed the only weapon, and twelve chosen men proceeded in disguise to Thebes, pledged to slay the tyrants and free the city. Twelve men against the strongest power in Europe, against a present garrison of 1,500 Spartan soldiers, against the overhanging peril of intrigue and betrayal and painful death!

Their rendezvous was the house of a prominent citizen named Charon, who was involved in the plot. They had taken the vital precaution of planting in the rulers' household a man named Phillidas, who contrived to get himself made secretary to Archias and Philip. Naturally, this was a big help to the conspirators. Plutarch tells the story in his inimitable style, in his *Life of Pelopidas*, relating how, on the appointed day, Phillidas invited Archias with others to an entertainment to drink freely, planning that when they were thoroughly drunk to deliver them to the exiles. Before Archias was completely overcome, he was notified of the conspiracy. Though Phillidas endeavored to divert his concern, Archias dispatched a guard to Charon's house to investigate. Between Phillidas and Charon the investigation met dead end. The clever secretary prolonged the entertainment and Archias became "deep in drink."

The historian states further how the first storm had just blown over when fortune brought another, for "a messenger came with a letter from one Archias, the heirophant at Athens, to his namesake Archias, who

was his particular friend. This did not merely contain a vague conjectural suspicion, but, as it appeared afterwards, disclosed every particular of the design. The messenger being brought in to Archias, who was now pretty well drunk, and delivering the letter, said to him, 'The writer of this desired it might be read at once; it is on urgent business.' Archias, with a smile, replied, 'Urgent business—tomorrow,' and so receiving the letter, he put it under his pillow, and returned to what he had been speaking of with Phillidas, and these words are a proverb to this day amongst the Greeks."

The rest of the story is short. Disguised as female entertainers, two of the conspirators entered the banquet hall and liquidated the tyrants, and Thebes was free. Urgent business tomorrow; but tomorrow never came.

We need waste no sympathy upon the victims, who probably deserved to die; but we can learn more than one valuable lesson from their behavior and their fate. In fact, the lessons are so numerous and so obvious that it is difficult to select one as the most striking. It is evident throughout the narrative that Archias was outrageously careless, which was the worst mistake a man in his position could possibly have made. Certain classes of men, such as rulers of hostile peoples, spies in enemy territory, soldiers on penetration patrol, jet pilots, and men who handle nitroglycerine, should never, never, even for an instant, forget what they are doing. Nor should we as professing Christians ever permit ourselves to grow careless or absent-minded. We occupy an exposed and highly dangerous position, where eternal vigilance is the price of survival. It is the unguarded moment that proves our undoing, for the enemy is everywhere, and never sleeps.

It is in view of the surrounding dangers that we should exercise the greatest care in the selection of our friends and counselors. False friends and bad advice were the ruin of the Theban tyrants, and many strong men through the ages have lost their

lives and fortunes through misplaced confidence. When we counsel with self, with the human heart which is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," or with those who can be depended upon to tell us what we want to hear, we are deliberately placing ourselves in the hands of the enemy.

We may shake our heads in wonder at the stupidity of Archias, who had more warnings than he deserved yet ignored them, allowing sensual pleasures to supersede his better judgment. But many times we have been no wiser. Again and again we have been warned of our spiritual danger, but have fatuously belittled the peril, or attributed ulterior motives to the true friend who delivered the warning. Any rumor, any suggestion from whatever source, that we are in transgression of Divine law, should be sifted to the bottom, for self-deception is so easy, and so much is at stake.

Last but not least is the ancient evil of procrastination. So much has been said, so much has been written, concerning this destructive habit, that it would seem little could be added. The trouble is, so little has ever been done about it. We read, or hear, or even write glowing words, words inciting to immediate action; but in our own case we turn away and say, "Urgent business—tomorrow." This habit is often an indication of moral flabbiness or laziness, and may be reflected or detected in our daily temporal activities. The habitual "putter-offer" has a moral weakness somewhere which he would do well to take in hand.

Or, still more malignant, it may be grounded in an overweening self-conceit. We overestimate our strength and our speed; we think we are an exception, a little above the rest, and we can safely enjoy the things of the flesh just a little longer and still catch up—or even keep ahead, if our conceit carries us that far. A better and stronger man than any of us, experienced and wise in the ways of mankind, wrote, "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." This is eternal wisdom. It is too late to take chances.

There is indeed urgent business tomorrow, but it is God's business. Our urgency is for today. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salva-

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"DECEIVING AND BEING DECEIVED"

YOU can fool some of the people all the time, and all the people some of the time; but—YOU CAN'T FOOL ALL THE PEOPLE ALL THE TIME.

Perhaps Oral Roberts, modern evangelist and faith healer, is discovering this to be true. During his campaign in Phoenix, Arizona, earlier this year, a group of ministers there offered \$1,000 for proof of divine healing—this without a single response. And now, when two widely circulated journals publish this fact to the nation, his prestige is bound to be impaired.

Nevertheless, spirit unquenchable, he aims even now to save a million souls for Christ by July 1956—an assignment supposedly direct from God and heard in audible tones. Does Mr. Roberts disregard the fact that salvation is the reward to be given at the end of life's race and not the beginning? "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22). Christ (and not some mortal evangelist) will come and save us (Isa. 35:4). And how can a million saved souls yearly harmonize with the narrow way which Christ proclaimed, and which only few will find (Matt. 7:14)?

To those who need introduction, Mr. Roberts is a 37-year-old Oklahoman, who asserts he was healed of tuberculosis at the age of 16, and granted the "healing power" by God some 12 years later; whereupon he moved to Tulsa and established headquarters now internationally known as *Healing Waters*. He has conducted numerous crusades and set up regular programs on many radio and TV stations. Also he publishes books, tracts and two magazines.

Most notable in the entire regime is Mr. Roberts' "healing" ability. He claims that the power of God flows like a current of electricity through his right arm, enabling him to cure all manner of diseases.

However, those who have chosen to investigate closely report that of the thousands who claim to have been cured at his revivals, the majority return home with the same ailments with which they came. Obviously, the Phoenix campaign produced not one restored person who was able to furnish proof of divine healing.

Today when some Americans are perplexed by the movement and more are thoroughly disgusted, we wish to lay before everyone the open Bible which shows clearly that God is neither Author, Supporter, nor Sanctioner of any present-day healing regime.

In the first place, divine healing was one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit power which is not available to the church today. Therefore anyone who claims to heal by means of that power is "deceiving and being deceived."

There are dispensational divisions in the Bible which must not be ignored. Each dispensation had certain laws which were binding at no other time. For example, the Noachian age had its ark which was the only place of safety when the Flood waters arose. The law of circumcision was binding upon Abraham and his descendants. While Israel existed as a nation the Mosaic law was their governing power (but it is no sin today to kindle a fire on the Sabbath, for we are not under that law).

Likewise, the Apostolic Age had its exclusive laws and privileges. The Apostles had access to Holy Spirit power which enabled them to produce signs of the divine authority of their gospel. They could "cast out devils" (any diseased condition whether physical or mental); they could "speak with tongues," "take up serpents," "drink

any deadly thing," "lay hands on the sick" causing instant recovery (Mark 16:17, 18).

This power was promised by Jesus and bestowed on the Day of Pentecost. However, He made no promise that it should exist always. Much to the contrary, He limited it to the end of that age*.

A. D. 70 marked the close of the Apostolic or Jewish Age and the suspension of Holy Spirit power with all ability to perform miracles.

Paul foretold the suspension of Holy Spirit power when the written Word should be completed. As long as God's message was delivered orally, it required divine confirmation which the signs of the Holy Spirit provided. But when the entire message was recorded (when John penned Amen to Revelation) and there were no new revelations to confirm, Holy Spirit power was withdrawn. It had fulfilled its purpose and was replaced by something better, something "perfect"—the written Word.

Paul said, "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). All signs of the Holy Spirit would cease with the completion of the perfect law of the Lord (Ps. 19:7), and only faith, hope and charity remain (I Cor. 13:13). Divine healing would be impossible, together with speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, and drinking any deadly thing.

Let any who still believe Holy Spirit power to be operating today compare present methods and results with those of the Apostolic Age. They should be identical if the same power is at work. But, note the differences:

1. Today faith is imperative to healing.
Then it was immaterial.
The healing power was as available to the father of Publius (Acts 28:7-9) who had no faith, as it was to the woman with the hemorrhage, whose faith made her whole (Matt. 9:20-22). It was available to the cripple at the Gate Beautiful who expected nothing more from Peter and John than a coin or two. Fully a third of the recorded healings of the Bible have no reference at all to required faith.
2. Today, Mr. Roberts advises, "Healing begins within. . . . Your attitude is important."
Then attitude was immaterial, as evidenced by the insane man. His attitude was so negative that he demanded the Lord to depart from him; nevertheless, he was restored to soundness of mind (Mark 5:1-20).
3. Today relapses occur.
Then the healing was instantaneous, permanent, and complete.
4. Today an entire campaign in Phoenix was not productive of one person willing to testify of divine healing.
Then testimonies could scarcely be silenced, so remarkable were the recoveries, so insuppressible the joy of restored health. Then, as in the case of the two blind men whose sight Jesus restored, they were adjured to tell no

* The Greek word translated "world" in our King James Version is *aion* meaning age and is so rendered by Goodspeed, Weymouth, Wilson in his *Emphatic Diaglott*, also the R.S.V., as follows: "I will always be with you, to the very close of the age"; "I am with you always, day by day, until the Close of the Age"; "And behold, I am with you all the days, till the consummation of the age"; "And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

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Meditations On the Word

"I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O Lord; for it is good" (Psalm 54: 6).

If there is anything certain in this universe, if there is anything that can be demonstrated to be positive, one thing stands out paramount: In our dealings with the Eternal we must bring to Him the best, the whole best, and nothing but the best. The tendency has ever been present to substitute the lesser for the best, whether the offering be of material or service.

According to the law of sacrifices given by Moses, when an offering was brought to the temple, what mattered was not its material value, but its completeness, its entirety (Lev. 1: 3; Deut. 17: 1). The slightest spot, blemish, or injury was sufficient to disqualify it. The people were to offer according to their means, but the offering was to be in sincerity. The offering was made to acknowledge the power of God, to own entire dependence upon Him or to conciliate His favor.

Let us consider an episode in the lives of the Children of Israel in the days of Malachi. This was some 450 years before Christ. The dominant power in the world at that time was the Persian despotism, the rule of which stretched from India to Egypt. Politically the Jews in the hilly country of Judea had long since lost their independence to become mere subjects of Persia. Religiously they were still self-confident and convinced of their superiority to the surrounding people. A visit to Jerusalem at this period of their history would reveal in their temple evidence of their religion, and in the palace of the Persian governor the evidence of their subjection.

To this people, thus situated, Malachi was sent. His message was simple and direct. He said in effect: Your life, of necessity, has two sides; yet why should it also have the two standards it so clearly has? Today you go to the governor to beg some privilege or to secure his support for some private end, and how careful you are in your choice of a present. Nothing but the best is good enough for him. Tomorrow you go to the temple to sacrifice, and what a difference! You drag thither some blind sheep out of your flock, or you choose out some beast of burden which has served your purpose about the farm, and is at the point of death. Anything will do for God! Make an experiment, take to your foreign governor what you are ready to offer to God, and see if he will accept it and grant you your petition—but, oh no, you would be ashamed to do such a thing (Mal. 1: 8)!

Let us ask ourselves whether there is not something in common between the spirit of our day and that which existed in Malachi's day? For example, think of the vast difference that exists between what a man will do for his country, and what he can be persuaded to do for God. Let a crisis arise, and men are ready in an instant to curtail private expenditures, to work untiringly, to sacrifice their leisure time; in a word, to set health, wealth and life itself at hazard and be glad to do it. If only a portion of this devotion were enlisted for the cause of God, much of today's evils would be swept from the land.

In Malachi's day—and this applies equally to us—many

would not be satisfied with anything less than an honorable standard in business or public life; but in the things of the Spirit it is sufficient if we barely get by. Why?

The Eternal's choice fruits of all the earth will be those who form characters without spot or blemish in His sight. The sad part is that many who first begin this undertaking so often remain—content or discontent—with a lower attainment. It becomes a difficult thing to give the utmost, to give our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable (Rom. 12: 1), to sacrifice freely unto God.

We talk or we sing of giving our best to the Master. To determine whether our giving is really our best will require careful judgment. For instance, we learn the way of God and we begin to direct our lives according to His will and no longer are led by circumstances or actions of others. We learn to discern between the evil and good and practice to choose the good. But there is something higher and nobler than this. A fine Christian character does not consist only in abstaining from the things which no gentleman would think of doing, but in doing those lofty and exalting things which are unlikely to be done by any except those who have an intense desire for eternal things.

This is what Jesus had in mind when He told His disciples that their righteousness must far exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. They must out-distance the best that the contemporary religious world could produce. One will find out that the real sacrifice comes in leaving behind the "good" and seeking, whatever the cost, to win the best. Someone has well stated a resolution: "All my bad into good, all my good into better, all my better into best, all my best into His best."

By this standard there is no stopping. As long as life lasts and strength permits we are to reach out—higher. One cannot rest on a good conscience, content even with having achieved something well worth while. A good conscience can be our ruin once we cease to listen to the voice crying, "Excelsior! there is something better yet."

When we consider fully what God requires of us, how can we dispute that it is but our reasonable service (Rom. 12: 1) to comply with His demands? To Him who gives us all things richly to enjoy and promises eternity, certainly our best is little enough. Jesus' keynote in temptation was, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4: 10). He instructed His followers to love the Lord with all their heart, mind, might and strength—nothing reserved for secondary interests.

The Apostle Paul's greatest ambition was to get the churches which he founded ready for the Master's approval. Note his earnestness as he writes: "According as he hath chosen us . . . that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1: 4). Later he wrote that the Church should be sanctified and cleansed, "that he [Christ] might present it unto himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5: 26, 27).

And this is the real sacrifice today, it is the ordinance for this age, to live a blameless life before God. When this is done freely and wholeheartedly then truly there is cause to praise the name of the Lord. But greater far will be the praises and rejoicing when the Church is completed and prepared as a Bride, spotless, pure, undefiled, and Christ, the Bridegroom, returns to claim her and utters those prophetic words: (Cant. 4: 7), "Thou art all fair . . . there is no spot in thee."

ITEMS FROM OUR MAIL BAG

This expression of gratitude is from readers at Orillia, Ont., Canada.

"Dear Friends of the Megiddo Mission: I am taking this opportunity again to let you know how much we both enjoy the MESSAGE. It surely does explain every thing so we can understand the Bible. We both did enjoy the visit of the Mission friends and hope they will come again. I will send my renewal next time as we do not want to be without the MESSAGE. Wishing you all the best, and may God send His blessing on you. I think Meditations on the Word is such a comfort. Again I send our thanks for the lovely motto. It surely is so nice to have.

Yours, Mrs. C— E—."

A young brother at Bloomfield, Iowa, replies to the monthly letter.

"Dear Brother: 'I feel like pressing on,' should be on the lips of every one of us at all times, in dark moments as well as when things are running smoothly. It would keep our minds more on higher things, and help us to remember that if we keep all the commandments, then God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, . . .

"When a person has something to do and has about finished his work, then something comes up and he glances backward for a moment or a second look at what is behind, then that is when it is hard to regain the steady pace that he had in the beginning. In that moment he lost some precious forward steps, and these steps are the ones which are hard to regain. There is only one alternative for a good worker, and that is to press on and never look back. Yours in the one Faith, C— M—."

An interesting letter comes from a reader of our literature residing in the vicinity of Wellington, New Zealand, of which we quote a portion.

"Dear Miss B—: I feel I must send you an air-mail letter or you will think I have quite forgotten you and your kindness in writing and sending me the book of your church history. . . . First let me say how interested I was in your meetings. . . . Yes, we do live in wonderful times, and I always feel the Divine Protection of the Father surrounding me and guiding me day by day, and know that all is well. . . . He is there to lift us out of the consciousness of evil into the consciousness of good, and then the fuller life is ours. . . . I close with love and blessing to you, and hope you will write. . . . M— F—."

URGENT BUSINESS — TOMORROW

(Continued from page 6)

tion." Unless we prepare urgently today, we shall never be selected to share the glories of tomorrow's business. The best opportunities of this life come to the men who are prepared and trained, and when the Kingdom of God comes with power, its high posts will be filled by men and women who have realized the importance, the urgency, of the present moment to prepare themselves.

If we could but realize how much is at stake: that a powerful and crafty enemy plots for our life, and that a glorious, eternal future can be forfeited by a careless moment or a wrong attitude, we would not lightly reject warnings, or linger in temptation, or make any provision for the flesh to fulfill its unlawful desires. Urgent business *today* is the only thing that will assure our survival in that bright Tomorrow.

"DECEIVING AND BEING DECEIVED"

(Continued from page 7)

man; but they spread abroad His fame in all that country (Matthew 9: 27—31). Another who had been blind from birth testified, "Whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9: 25). Now when testimonies are solicited, they cannot even be purchased!

If Mr. Roberts' personal healing is a sample of divine power, then it is vastly less potent than it was in the Apostolic Age. He reports that after being healed of tuberculosis he was feeling "extremely weak in the body," "discouraged," and was dependent upon his mother to save his healing by creating an atmosphere of faith and advising that he exercise to regain strength.

No one in Apostolic times who was healed by the power of God had to resort to the reasonings of man to save his healing. Neither could an atmosphere of unbelief imperil the healing. It was genuine!

We do not deny that the Roberts' method is effective upon certain ills and temperaments. Some cures are wrought through animal magnetism. His high-pressure evangelism definitely works a physical reaction upon many who are emotionally unstable. Severe shock to the system, also intense mental stimulation have been known to effect astonishing cures outside the pulpit as well as behind the mask of divine power.

Then, too, it is a known fact that of the 1,500,000 who are hospitalized in America today, one half of the number are mental cases, and many millions similarly afflicted are still on their feet. Furthermore, many physical ills are aggravated and even created by an uncontrolled mental attitude.

The Roberts' method requires mental adjustment. It requires that fear, worry, high tension, be replaced by a vigorous faith. And then healing follows! A notable miracle? Divine healing? No! Health is a natural result of banishing worry. Half the people afflicted with physical and mental ills could cure themselves by a rigid application of the Roberts' formula. By prescribing a corrective life philosophy many psychiatrists are effecting better results than Mr. Roberts produces under the cloak of the divine. Take, for example, a very popular New York minister, who, with his psychiatrist associates, has from his New York study restored poise, sanity and health to thousands.

Mr. Roberts' claim to be exercising divine power today is in defiance of the Scriptures. The Prophet Joel foretold a former rain and a latter rain, necessitating a dry season between. The former rain of Holy Spirit power began on the Day of Pentecost, and the latter rain is designated by Jesus to be ushered in by Elijah the Prophet: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things" (Matt. 17: 11). Until Elijah returns (Mal. 4: 5, 6) as herald of Christ's second advent and fulfills this prophecy, no healing that may take place is a sign of divine power. If the power is divine, it can be demonstrated by parallel signs of the Holy Spirit: raising the dead, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, drinking any deadly thing. Will Mr. Roberts demonstrate?

The above subject is covered in greater detail
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WHEN THE DAY DAWNS AND THE SHADOWS FLEE AWAY

I am waiting, I am longing, for the dawning of the day
When the sun bursts forth in glory, and the shadows flee away.
When no thick cloud of darkness shall hide my Lord from me,
But His very form and beauty with gladness I shall see.

Oh! what a day to hope for; eternal life and joy,
No single care to pain the heart, no trouble to annoy;
No anxious thoughts to weary, naught that shall mar our peace;
But life that is unending, filled with joy that ne'er shall cease.

It is coming! it is coming! I can tell that it is near.
God's word sounds through the darkness that tells me not to fear;
But watch and pray in patience until Christ shall appear,
Who'll give perfect health for weakness, and dry up every tear.

Listen! listen! He is speaking; what do I hear Him say?
"Rise up my love, My fair one, and quickly come away;
The winter's past, its darkness and discomforts all are o'er,
The storms which beat upon thy head shall never hurt thee more.

"The flowers appear upon the earth, the birds begin to sing,
The earth is decked with glory, a never-ending spring;
The gloom for aye is banished, 'tis a bright and glorious day;
Arise, my love, my fair one, and with me come away."

Oh! gladly will I listen, my beloved unto Thee,
And give up all I now possess, that I may be with Thee;
And know Thee in Thy glory, and see Thee as Thou art,
And do Thy will as angels do, with all my mind and heart.